

# *Monks, Middle Egypt, and Metanoia: The Life of Phib by Papohe the Steward (Translation and Introduction)*

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In recent years, the fourth- and fifth-century pioneers of Christian monasticism have become better known; much less widely known are the monks of Middle Egypt, especially the remarkable Abba Apollo. The *Life of Phib* provides an important addition to the fragmentary history of the monks of Middle Egypt. It seems to show the transition from scattered anchoritic and semianchoritic communities to a larger, more centralized community gathered around the figure of Apollo and the feast day of Phib, theologizes and liturgizes two common early monastic actions, prostration and *metanoia*, and recounts the divine establishment at Titkooh of, seemingly, the equivalent of Ash Wednesday and the Day of Atonement. Archaeological evidence corroborates what the *Life of Phib* describes: a wall painting found at the ancient monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara seems to depict this rite of prostration and repentance.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the fourth- and fifth-century pioneers of Christian monasticism have become better known: in Lower Egypt: Antony, Macarius, Amoun, Evagrius, the Tall Brothers; in Upper Egypt: Pachomius and Shenoute. Much less widely known are the monks of Middle Egypt, especially the remarkable Abba Apollo.<sup>2</sup> Although the *Historia monachorum*

1. I wish to thank William Harmless, S.J., and the two anonymous readers for *JECS* for their suggestions.

2. Two other representatives of monasticism in Middle Egypt are Paul of Tamma and John of Shmoun. For the former, see E. Amélineau, ed., "Vie de Paul de Tamoueh," *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne: Mémoires*

includes some monastics of Middle Egypt in its accounts, these monks apparently left no outstanding written works like the *Apophthegmata* or the writings by and about Pachomius and Shenoute;<sup>3</sup> in fact, the monks of Middle Egypt may be best known today, at least by scholars, because of the excavations of their ruined monasteries, especially those at Bawit and Saqqara.<sup>4</sup> The *Life of Phib*, then, offered here for the first time into English, offers an important addition to the fragmentary history of the monks of Middle Egypt.

The *Life of Phib* translated below is from a Sahidic Coptic manuscript in the Morgan Library dated to 994.<sup>5</sup> Papyrus fragments in the British Library suggest that the *Life* was part of a larger composition.<sup>6</sup> The Copto-Arabic *Synaxarion* gives just a few details from the Coptic text (noted in the translation below).<sup>7</sup> An Arabic version translated from a different Coptic text may be found in the National Library in Paris and in the library of the Monastery of Saint Antony by the Red Sea.<sup>8</sup>

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publiés par les membres de la mission archéologique française au Caire (Paris: E. Leroux, 1888), 759–69, 835–36; Tito Orlandi, ed. and trans., *Paolo di Tamma: Opere* (Rome: C. I. M., 1988); and, for an English translation, Tim Vivian and Birger A. Pearson, “Saint Paul of Tamma on the Monastic Cell,” *Hallel* 23.2 (1998): 86–107. For the latter, see Gérard Garitte, “Panégyrique de saint Antoine par Jean, évêque d’Hermopolis,” *OCP* 9.3 (1943): 100–134, 330–65, and Tim Vivian, “John of Shmūn: An Encomium on Saint Antony of Egypt,” in Tim Vivian and Apostolos Athanassakis, trans., *The Life of Antony* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, forthcoming).

3. The *Apophthegmata*, though they may have been edited in Palestine, have their origin in Scetis in Lower Egypt; the Apollo who has three sayings in the Alphabetical Collection is not the same person as the Apollo of Middle Egypt.

4. For introductions to these monasteries, see “Bawit,” *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 2:362–72, and “Dayr Apa Jeremiah (Saqqara),” *Coptic Encyclopedia*, 3:772–79, and the bibliographies in each article.

5. M 633, 47–68; see H. Hyvernat, *Bibliothecae Pierpont Morgan codice coptici photographice expressi* (Rome: n.p., 1922), vol. 56; A. van Lantschoot, *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d’Egypte* (Louvain: Bibliothèque du Muséon, 1929; repr. Milan, 1973), fasc. 1, no. 114, pp. 201–2, and fasc. 2, pp. 80–81. For the edited text, Tito Orlandi, *Vite dei Monachi Phif e Longino*. Testi e documenti per lo Studio dell’antichità 51 (Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1975), with an Italian translation by Antonella Campagnano. For a description of the codex, see Orlandi, *Phif*, 13–14 and, on the date, 14.

6. See Bentley Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired Since the Year 1906* (London: British Library, 1987), 157–58.

7. R. Basset, ed., *Le Synaxaire arabe-jacobite*, PO 1 (1904): 366–69 (under 25 Babah (or Babeh) [October 22 (Julian)]). The synaxery says only that Phib died, that there was a rite of forgiveness on his feast day, and summarizes the story of the dead monk Zachary (see par. 18 below).

8. René-Georges Coquin, “Phib, Saint,” *Coptic Encyclopedia*, 6:1953–54. See G. Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*, vol. 1: *Manuscrits chrétiens* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1972–74), 38–63.

The “Life” of Phib is a misnomer; indeed, the piece could be retitled “The Death of Phib,” since Phib (Abib in Arabic) is important not for his life but for what occurs after his passing. The *Life of Phib* is also more about Apollo than Phib, and was probably originally part of a *Life of Apollo*.<sup>9</sup> At some point, an editor added portions to the latter in order to focus attention on Phib, his death, and the unique feast day celebrated in his honor. Tito Orlandi has reasonably suggested that paragraphs 3–4 and 6–17 formed the original *Life of Apollo*.<sup>10</sup> Paragraph 3 commences with what looks like the beginning of a work (perhaps an encomium) on Apollo: “Listen to me, my beloved brothers in the Lord, and I will tell you of the great works and living teachings of our blessed father, Apa Apollo, the man of God.” It is here that the narrator Papohe first identifies himself, although the first person is used in par. 2. Paragraph 1 offers a generic encomiastic introduction, while par. 2 introduces Phib as the subject. Papohe is a disciple of Apollo (he calls him “my father”), and Phib’s appearances in paragraphs 4 and 5 seem to be afterthoughts—or insertions: “Our beloved brother Apa Phib the holy was there with him [Apollo]” (par. 4), and “There too was Apa Phib, a person who loved quiet at all times” (par. 5). The subject of paragraph 4, in fact, bounces back and forth between Apollo and Phib, which makes one suspect that the parts about Phib are later additions. The fact that Phib dies, rather unceremoniously, part way through the narrative (par. 10) increases the suspicion that the original text was about Apollo, with Phib’s feast day (not his death) marking an important event in the life of Apollo’s monastic community.

The narrator of the *Life* as we now have it is Papohe, the disciple of Apollo and steward of the community. Since the *Life of Paul of Tamma* also associates Papohe closely with Apollo, and since he is present throughout the text, the attribution of the narrative to him appears to be reliable.<sup>11</sup> According to Papohe, Phib was from the nome of Shmoun and

9. The best previous discussion of Phib and Apollo is by René-Georges Coquin, “Apollon de Titkooh ou/et Apollon de Bawit?” *Orientalia* 46 (1977): 435–46. The Arabic synaxery shows that Apollo (Aboulou) and Phib (Abib) shared the same feast day, that of Apollo being celebrated on this day “following the custom of Upper Egypt.” The synaxery also says very little about Phib; it gives most of its attention to Apollo, recounting his miraculous birth and his relations with Macarius the Great. See Basset, *Synaxaire*, 366–69.

10. Orlandi, *Phif*, 16. See Coquin, “Apollon de Titkooh,” 435; Layton, *Catalogue*, 157–58.

11. See Amélineau, “Vie de Paul de Tamoueh,” 761.

stayed with Apollo five years (par. 2) before dying at Titkooh (par. 10).<sup>12</sup> Phib's dates are unknown; all we can say is that he lived in the fourth century. After just two brief paragraphs on Phib, Papohe exclaims, "Listen to me, my beloved brothers in the Lord, and I will tell you of the great works and living teachings of our blessed father, Apa Apollo, the man of God, who offered his body as a holy sacrifice to God, who became a dwelling place for the Father and a place of rest for the Son and a place of assembly for the Holy Spirit" (par. 3). The subsequent "Life of Apollo" has two purposes: first, it wishes to claim Apollo as the "father" of the monastery (or, rather, monastic community) of Titkooh; second, it wishes to give the divine origins of the *metanoia*, or day of repentance and absolution, that came to be associated with Phib's feast day.

The *Life of Phib* also seems to show the transition from scattered anchoritic and semianchoritic communities to a larger, more centralized community gathered around the figure of Apollo and the feast day of Phib (pars. 16–17).<sup>13</sup> This situation, in fact, provides some of the strongest evidence for monastic practices in Apollo's community that can be corroborated outside the *Life*. In par. 16 the brothers build a church and "continued to gather in it every day before they ate their bread." Such a custom was not observed in semianchoritic communities, where all the monks assembled together only on Saturdays and Sundays, and would be feasible only in a cenobitic community. The *Historia monachorum* reports that the members of Apollo's community (500 of them, it says) all shared a common life and ate at the same table (8.18). It goes on to say, in agreement with the *Life of Phib*, that those who lived with Apollo "do not take any food themselves until they have assisted at the Eucharist and received Communion."<sup>14</sup> This daily Communion, the *Historia* relates, was because of the express commandment of Apollo: "He also said, 'Monks, if possible, should communicate daily in the Mysteries of Christ.'"<sup>15</sup> This agreement between the *Historia monachorum* and the *Life of Phib* not only illustrates one aspect of the (now cenobitic) community but also testifies to the historical trustworthiness of at least some details of the *Life*.

12. According to the *Life of Paul of Tamma*, Phib was from Perčoush in the nome of Touhō, and lived as a hermit for eighteen years on the mountain of Peshčepohe where he expected to die. See Amélineau, "Vie de Paul," 763.

13. See Orlandi, *Phib*, 16.

14. *Historia monachorum* 8.50; *The Lives of the Desert Fathers: The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, trans. Norman Russell (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1981), 77.

15. *Historia monachorum* 8.56; Russell, trans., 78.

Apollo was born around 305, and lived most of the fourth century.<sup>16</sup> His monastic activity centered around Hermopolis Magna in the Thebaid (Shmoun; al-Ashmunein in the Middle Sa'id) between modern-day al-Minya and Asyut (Lycopolis);<sup>17</sup> according to the *Historia monachorum*, "when he was eighty years old he established on his own a great monastery of five hundred perfect men" at Bawit, about fifteen miles south of Hermopolis.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the *Historia monachorum*, Apollo is very well known from epigraphic and iconographic evidence found along the entire Nile valley of Middle and Upper Egypt, from Saqqara (Memphis) in the north, to Bawit, to Esna (Latopolis), south of Thebes (Luxor).<sup>19</sup> His companions are usually Phib and Anoub, who figure in the *Life*.<sup>20</sup> A number of inscriptions from the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara list Apollo and Phib, Apollo and Anoup, or Apollo, Anoup, and Phib; one striking inscription ranks the three saints of Bawit (Apollo, Anoup, and Phib) right after the Trinity, Michael, and Gabriel, and before Apa Jeremias, the founder of the monastery.<sup>21</sup>

Although the ancient sources show some confusion about chronology and location with regard to Apollo, there is no doubt that Apollo of Bawit is the same as Apollo of Titkooh, who figures prominently in the

16. The travelers of the *Historia monachorum*, who made their trip around 394, seem to have visited Apollo (ch. 8) when he was in his late 80s; see 8.2.

17. On this area, see Stefan Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, 6 vols. (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1984–1992), 1:198–220. A list, possibly from the ninth century, of twenty-four churches in the Shmoun area includes (no. 5) one named after "Apa Apollo"; see Timm, *Christlich-koptische Ägypten*, 1:206. For a map, see *Coptic Encyclopedia*, 8:8.

18. *Historia monachorum* 8.2; Russell, trans., 70. For a thorough discussion, see Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 435–38.

19. See Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 436, for references.

20. A fresco inside the ancient church at the Monastery of Saint Paul (Red Sea) shows Apollo and Apip (Phib); see Nabil Selim Atalla, *Coptic Art*, vol. 1: *Wall-Paintings* (Cairo: Lehnert & Landrock, n.d.), 101.

21. See Sir Herbert Thompson, "The Coptic Inscriptions," in J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1908–1909, 1909–1910)*, vol. 4: *The Monastery of Apa Jeremias* (Cairo: IFAO, 1912), 47–125: Apollo and Phib (#185, 203, 219, 226, 251), Apollo and Anoup (#204, 329), and Apollo, Anoup, and Phib (#222, 240). An inscription at Bawit (Room XVIII, East Wall, #XI) lists "God, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, *oumarihama* [ΟΥΜΑΡΙΣΑΜΑ; Miriam? Mary?], Apa Apollo, Apa Phib, Apa Anoup, Apa Jacob the father of the monastery [*topos*], Apa Isaac the *hégoumenos* . . ."; see Jean Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouït. Mémoires publiés par les membres de L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire* 12 (one volume in two parts) (Cairo: IFAO, 1904), 96. See among many others #XIV, p. 85, and II, p. 107.

*Life of Phib*.<sup>22</sup> It seems that a number of monastic communities wanted to have the honor of having Apollo as their founder; the *Life of Phib* attempts to claim Apollo exclusively for Titkooh, and adjusts the facts accordingly.<sup>23</sup> Apollo's coming to Titkooh is divinely sanctioned and ordained. Christ appears to the monk and tells him to go to Titkooh, which God has given him as an "inheritance": God "placed there the bones of your companion, Apa Phib, so you too would abide there" (par. 11). Christ informs Apollo: "Everyone who keeps your commandments I will give to you as children in my kingdom. Everyone who perseveres in your work and service will be your children in my Father's house" (par. 12). When Apollo and Papohe arrive at Titkooh, the monks welcome them "with great rejoicing" and tell them of a "mystery" they have seen: a trumpet had awakened them from sleep, informing them that "the good shepherd who has pastured his sheep in the pasture of life has come." Accompanying the celestial trumpet, a choir of angels had "spent the entire night singing and dancing" over the grave of Apa Phib, exalting Titkooh as "the mountain of the Lord." The monks proclaim Apollo as their shepherd and ask to be his children. Apollo humbly answers that if this is God's will, so be it (all par. 14).

Phib's future, according to the *Life*, is also divinely ordained. Phib relates to Apollo that when he was living at home as a child he was shepherding the family's flock one day when a "holy old man of God" passed by. Since it was late, Phib invited him to eat and spend the night; in the morning, Phib "prostrated himself" (Coptic *paht*=, an important term; see below) before the old man and asked for his blessing. The old man says only one thing: "There will be a day for the forgiveness of sin in your name" (par. 7). We learn about this prophecy in a "flashback" wherein Phib tells Apollo the story of his encounter with the old man. In the narrative Apollo has just looked Phib over and likened him to the lamp hidden under a bushel basket (Mt 5.15): "There is no gift of the forgiveness of sin on your day each year." At hearing this, Phib im-

22. See Orlandi, *Phif*, 15, who cites W. E. Crum and Martin Krause as already having made this identification, and his conclusions on 18.

23. See Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 438. Since Apollo and Phib travel to various monastic communities, and since a number of these seem to claim Apollo as their founder, one wonders if they form some sort of "multicommunity system" like the Pachomian *koinonia* with Apollo as their charismatic leader. See James E. Goehring, "Monastic Diversity and Ideological Boundaries in Fourth-Century Egypt," *J ECS* 5 (1997): 61–83; repr. in Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert: Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism*. Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1999), 196–218.

mediately prostrates himself (*paht=*). Apollo tells him to get up, that it is the Holy Spirit who has prophesied, and that he is to keep this “mystery” until it is made manifest (par. 6). Phib then asks to speak, Apollo grants him permission, and he tells Apollo how when he was a boy an old man did indeed reveal that there would be a day of repentance in his name (par. 7). This narrative structure serves several purposes: it underscores both Apollo’s prophetic insight (par. 6) and the divine plan for Phib (par. 7). It also, perhaps unintentionally, highlights the monastic tension between humility (seen in Phib) and the requirements of fulfilling divinely appointed charism, especially as mandated by those in authority (seen when Apollo tells Phib not to hide his lamp).

Later, Apollo and Phib visit Titkooh (this is before Apollo’s “triumphant entry” and apparently before the revelation of the trumpet) where Phib dies and is buried (par. 10). Interestingly, Apollo and Papohe journey on, and it is only later, when they have left Titkooh, that Christ tells Apollo of Phib’s inheritance at Titkooh (par. 11). Apollo tries to shuffle out of his part and hand it over to Papohe, who, he says, is a better steward than he.<sup>24</sup> Like someone tapped on the shoulder by God for service in the Old Testament, Apollo seems to be saying, “Why me, Lord?” Dramatically, this evasion precedes an astonishing revelation: Christ tells Apollo that before the incarnation, as he was preparing to come to earth, his Father declared to him that the day of his birth and the day of his resurrection would be days of absolution (*eleutheria*) “for the forgiveness of sin.” In addition, the Father declares, “I will reveal a holy place on the earth and at the end of time I will establish there an act of repentance [*metanoia*] . . . a feast day . . . and a day for the forgiveness of sin for everyone who believes in your name.” Then Christ tells Apollo, “the gift that my Father gave to me I now give to you also.” This holy place is Titkooh, where the name of Apa Phib will be proclaimed. “Do not be afraid,” Christ assures Apollo, “I am with you everywhere; I will give you a great and famous name, and all the people will listen and will come to your site for this gift and will worship at your holy place” (all par. 12).

With such divine approbation, Apollo instructs his monks to build a small church “over the body of our blessed brother Apa Phib.” So many people throng to Titkooh, however, that Christ tells Apollo to build a large church; then the Savior “walked with him and instructed him

24. Earlier (par. 5), Apollo calls him “Papohe the steward.” The inscription at Bawit mentioned above (n. 11) calls Papophe “Apa Papohe the Steward.”



concerning the entire boundary of the church. He told him its length and its breadth" (par. 16). Finally, Christ appoints Archangel Michael as protector, and ascends into heaven. When Phib's feast day, the twenty-fifth of Paope [October 22 (Julian)], draws nigh, Apollo instructs his monks to send for their brothers in "all" the monastic communities so they can celebrate an Agape feast: "When we gathered together on the twenty-fourth of Paope we passed the whole night . . . with rejoicing and gladness, celebrating a great *synaxis* with psalms in gladness and rejoicing in the Spirit" (par. 17). In the morning a young monk, Zachary, dies. After they bury him they pray together and prostrate themselves (*paht=*) for a long time; then Apollo declares, "Truly, God has forgiven the sins of everyone who prostrates himself (*paht=*) here today as on the day they were born" (par. 18). Many believe. Some of the brothers, however, do not. Suddenly, up jumps Zachary, his burial cloths falling away, and exclaims, "One is God, Christ Jesus our Lord!" and repeats what Apollo declared. "When he had said these things, he went to sleep, and immediately the linens wrapped around him again. The multitude that saw him were amazed and their hearts were strengthened. They knew that the act of repentance [*metanoia*] was from God and that God had bestowed the gift of the forgiveness of sins on our brother Apa Phib" (par. 18).

The *Life of Phib* theologizes and liturgizes two common early monastic actions: prostration and *metanoia*. A number of descriptions of prostration occur in the *Apophthegmata*. In some cases, prostration is simply a gesture of respect for one's abba, the acknowledgement, it seems, that the abba possesses something holy (a usage found also in the *Life of Phib*; see, e.g., pars. 6 and 7). For example, Abba Isaac, a disciple of Poimen, prostrated himself before the old man when he saw him have an ecstatic experience.<sup>25</sup> But prostration can also be an act of repentance: an unnamed monk prostrated himself before Abba Zeno when the old man alerted him to his sinfulness.<sup>26</sup> In both Coptic and Greek sources, the offer of *metanoia* shows that the person is sorry or is begging forgiveness, but can also suggest humility rather than sinfulness. In the Coptic *Life of Macarius of Scetis*, for example, Macarius goes to Antony: "Abba Macarius implored him [ⲏⲁⲕⲓⲧⲁⲓ ⲛⲟⲩ] and with tears begged him [ⲏⲁⲕⲓⲧⲁⲓ ⲙⲉⲧⲁⲛⲟⲓⲁ] to let him stay with him . . . and Abba Antony, not wishing to cause him grief, allowed him to stay with him. Then Abba

25. *AP* Poemen 144 (PG 65:358).

26. *AP* Nau 509, quoted in Columba Stewart, "Radical Honesty about the Self: The Practice of the Desert Fathers," *Sobornost* 12 (1990): 25–39, 31–32.



Macarius asked his forgiveness [αϣ† μετάνοια] . . . .”<sup>27</sup> In a Greek fragment dealing with John the Little, however, the use of *metanoia* brings with it the request for forgiveness (even if, as in this case, the “sin” is not great).<sup>28</sup> One time at dinner John snapped at a talkative old man and rebuked him by leaving the table. John’s disciple went to him and asked, “Why, abba, did you offend the old man so he went away sad?” John replied,

It is far better and mightier and more seemly and suitable not to provoke God . . . . For a monk talking while he eats is no different from a young porker or tomcat, for the young pig grunts while it eats and the tomcat purrs loudly while it eats. (But) I will go [to] this old man and ask his forgiveness [βάλλω μετάνοιαν] and he will forgive me [συγχώρει μοί]; he will benefit from this and I will sit undisturbed and you will go to your cell without being harmed.<sup>29</sup>

More penitently, in the *Virtues of Saint Macarius*, a monk accused of theft asks the forgiveness (αϣ† μετάνοια) of his community.<sup>30</sup> In the *Life of Phib*, both “prostration” (par. 18) and “*metanoia*” (pars. 12, 18) have evolved into liturgical terms for an act of repentance and consequent absolution.

If we had only the *Life of Phib* for evidence, it would be impossible to historically corroborate the details of the hagiographical account that exalts Apollo, Phib, and their monastic community and, by liturgizing prostration and *metanoia*, recounts the divine establishment at Titkooh of, seemingly, the equivalent of Ash Wednesday and the Day of Atonement. As we have seen above with regard to the custom of daily Communion in Apollo’s community, the *Life* contains seemingly historical details; these combine, however, with a theological and hagiographical aetiology that lies outside the customary expertise of the historian.<sup>31</sup> But,

27. E. Amélineau, “Vie de Macaire de Scété,” *Histoire des moines de la Basse-Égypte* (Paris: Leroux, 1894), 85. It is interesting that Amélineau freely and reasonably translates the first example of *metanoia* in the passage cited as an act of prostration: “le suppliait à genoux.”

28. Analogously, see the *Virtues of Saint Macarius* (Amélineau, 157), where Evagrius asks the forgiveness (-† μετάνοια) of Macarius.

29. René Draguet, “A la source de deux apophtegmes grecs (PG 65, Jean Colobos 24 et 32),” *Byzantion* 32 (1962): 53–61; the quotation may be found on p. 56.

30. Amélineau, *Virtues*, 164. When Macarius comes to the monastery, the brother “asked the old man’s forgiveness just as Abba Macarius asked forgiveness of the brother, and they accepted forgiveness from each other” (Amélineau, 165).

31. The most striking contrast is that historically Phib does not seem to have been very important or to have been a person of outstanding qualities (although he did love

in fact, we have supporting evidence that such a *metanoia*, or day of repentance and absolution, was celebrated in late antiquity—not only at Titkooh, but, apparently, throughout Middle Egypt.

The evidence for this *metanoia* is substantial. A fragmentary liturgical calendar from Oxyrhynchus (probably from a monastic community there) that dates to 535–36 has this instruction for 25 Pahopi, Phib's feast day: "to [the church of] Saint Serenus, day of repentance [*metan(oias)*]." <sup>32</sup> In the five months of instructions that the calendar preserves, this is the only example of a *metanoia*. Far to the south, at Sühāj (Sohag, near Akhmim), the monks at the White Monastery, which was founded by Saint Shenoute, celebrated 25 Paope as "the feast of prostration/repentance [*pah<t>s*] (in the name) of (Apa) Apollo and Apa Phib." <sup>33</sup> Another papyrus fragment merely mentions "the feast of Apa Apollo and Apa Phib." <sup>34</sup> An inscription at Bawit speaks of "our beloved father Apa Apollo, friend of the angels, and our beloved father Anoup the confessor [*homologitis*], and our beloved father Apa Phib, he of the saving repentance [*pa tmetanoia noujai*]." <sup>35</sup> The manuscript of the *Life of Phib* comes from Edfu (Apollonopolis Magna in the southern Thebaid); <sup>36</sup> it and these papyrus fragments and inscriptions demonstrate that the rite of *metanoia/pahts* was known in the south at the White Monastery at Sühāj (Sohag) and at Edfu, at Bawit in the Thebaid, and north at Oxyrhynchus. <sup>37</sup> It was a feast day associated with Apollo and Phib and was a day of repentance (*metanoia*) and prostration (*pahts*). Further evidence, considered below, demonstrates that the rite was known and practiced as far north as Saqqara, just south of Babylon (Cairo), at the monastery of Apa Jeremias.

quiet, which would have been highly regarded among monks) while hagiographically he is chosen by God as a youth to have a day of forgiveness celebrated in his name (par. 7).

32. Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 442: εἰς τὸν ἄγ(ιον) Σεργήνον ἡμέρ(α) μεταν(οίας).

33. Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 443: πωδ πταπαρ<τ>̅ π̅απολλω η̅π̅ <δ>πα περ̅ι̅ει̅ρ̅. Coquin has emended παρ̅̅ to παρ<τ>̅̅ (see W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1939], 283AB) by means of a papyrus fragment that, unfortunately, has no provenance: τ̅παρ̅̅τ̅̅ <π̅>απ<ο>α<λ>ω, "the prostration/repentance of Apollo."

34. Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 443.

35. Clédât, *Monastère*, 119–20 (Room XX, #I).

36. Orlandi, *Phib*, 13.

37. An inscription from Bawit, Apollo's monastery (see n. 21), describes Phib as a "man of penitence [*metanoia*] for salvation," a phrase echoed by the *Life*; see J. Clédât, ed., *Mémoires de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale* 12.119.

What was this singular ritual?<sup>38</sup> Liturgical prostration was apparently practiced by the monks of Kellia in Lower Egypt, although it is not clear whether the rite was explicitly associated with penitence. At the weekend *synaxis*, or communal worship, the monks recited a number of psalms, each of which was followed by a prayer said standing up and then a moment of prostration; the celebration of the Eucharist concluded the service.<sup>39</sup> Despite the lack of direct liturgical connection here between prostration and penitence, the earliest monks clearly acknowledged their sinfulness: “Abba Antony said to Abba Poimen, ‘This is a person’s great work: to always accept the blame for his own sins before God,’” while Abba Matoës declared that “the closer a person comes to God, the more he sees himself a sinner.”<sup>40</sup> Declarations like these demonstrate that the monks believed the desert to be the dwelling place of sinners, not saints, because it was in the desert that one stood most nakedly before God.<sup>41</sup> As Matoës continued, “It was when Isaiah the prophet saw God that he declared himself ‘a person of unclean lips’ [Isa 6.5].” Sinlessness was not something to be achieved; sin and repentance would be one’s constant companions throughout the monastic journey; this understanding was part of the monks’ awareness that even at the end of the monastic life they had only just made a beginning: Antony, at the conclusion of the saying quoted above, advised others to expect temptation to their last breath. As Hermann Dörries has noted, the monks’ theological and empirical bases for these beliefs lay in their own interior workings, the devices and desires of their own hearts, that they knew all too well:

In the face of God’s holiness the conception soon dies out that sin is a matter of individual, avoidable deeds which could be atoned away with a shorter or longer period of time [that is, as within the Church’s developing penitential system].<sup>42</sup> Beneath the deeds there lies the ground from which they ascend—tempting thoughts. These above all, these λογισμοί, which are

38. Coquin, “Apollon de Titkooh,” 438: “assez singulier.”

39. See Antoine Guillaumont, “Les moines des Kellia aux 4e et 5e siècles,” in “Saint Antoine et les moines du désert,” *Dossiers Histoire et Archéologie* 133 (December 1988), 7–8; for the service, see also Guillaumont, “Les moines des Kellia,” in Myriam Orban, ed., *Déserts chrétiens d’Égypte* (Nice: Culture Sud, 1993), 37–38.

40. *AP* Antony 4 and Matoës 2.

41. Columba Stewart believes that “the dominant values” in early monasticism were “humility and obedience, rather than penitence and pardon.” See his excellent article, “Radical Honesty about the Self.” But perhaps it was precisely humility that prepared one to acknowledge sin, do penance, and seek pardon.

42. For a discussion of this system, see Tim Vivian, *St. Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr: Studies in Antiquity and Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), esp. chapter 3 and the works cited there.

mentioned over and over again, are the targets of the monastics' struggle. To succumb to them ever again is guilt; always to remain exposed to them is ineluctable.<sup>43</sup>

Given such an understanding, it is not surprising that the monks did develop a liturgical rite of repentance. (The surprise, in fact, is that we do not see more evidence of it in the sources.) The *Life of Phib* assumes that monks are sinful and in need of atonement; the work offers no theological (or even pastoral) discussion concerning the rite. It is a given, like the sand on the ground and the ever-present sun in the desert sky. The *Life* clearly shows that the monasteries of Middle Egypt developed such a liturgical act of repentance and that it became associated with the feast day of Apa Phib; it also suggests that this liturgical practice originated in monasteries connected with Apa Apollo.<sup>44</sup> Surviving sources show that it was described with both Greek and Coptic terms: *metanoia*, "repentance," and *paht=*, *pahts*, "prostration."<sup>45</sup> It is likely that, in the bilingual world of late antique Egypt, the terms were symbiotically doing double duty, and that each influenced the meaning of the other. As the *Life of Phib* shows, prostration (*pahts*) was the outward and visible sign of an interior action: repentance (*metanoia*).<sup>46</sup> The *Life of Phib* demonstrates that for at least some monks of late antique Egypt, the days of Christ's birth and resurrection were considered the primary days of "absolution for salvation and the forgiveness of sin" and that the *metanoia* granted on Phib's feast day was seen as a "gift" given by Christ from the plenitude of forgiveness that came with his incarnation and resurrection (par. 12). R.-G. Coquin thus terms the rite a *mikra metanoia* (μικρὰ μετάνοια) or "small act of repentance." In later Coptic tradition, the feast day persisted, but the specific act of prostration seems to have been lost: the entry for 25 Babeh in the Arabic synaxery says that "if someone prays a prayer today in the name of Saint Anba Phib, Christ the Savior

43. Hermann Dörries, "The Place of Confession in Ancient Monasticism," *SP* 5.3 (TU 80) (1962): 284–311, esp. 284–98; this article is a translation by Hans Frei of Dörries' article in *Judentum—Urchristentum—Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*. ZNW Beiheft 26 (Berlin, 1960), 235–59. This is not the place to discuss the subject in full; for a good introduction, see Dörries.

44. Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 443, describes it as "cette innovation d'Apollon," but the extant evidence does not conclusively demonstrate this.

45. *Eleutheria*, Greek for "absolution," is followed by the redundant Coptic *nka nobe ebol*, "the forgiveness of sins" (par. 12), one of the signs that the *Life* was translated from Greek into Coptic; see Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 441.

46. See Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 440; Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 283AB.

will forgive his sin, as promised.”<sup>47</sup> Eventually the feast was no longer celebrated.<sup>48</sup>

Archaeological evidence may provide us a snapshot, as it were, of what the *Life of Phib* describes. A wall painting found at the ancient monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara seems to depict this rite of prostration and repentance.<sup>49</sup> The painting shows the standing figures of Onnophrius, Macarius, Apollo,<sup>50</sup> and another figure whose name, unfortunately, has been lost, but who is, in all likelihood, Apa Phib.<sup>51</sup> In

47. Emphasis added. Thus, without an act of prostration, the rite seems to have come full circle. In par. 12 of the *Life of Phib*, Christ does not specifically enjoin prostration: “I will reveal a holy place on the earth at the end of time and I will establish there an act of repentance for salvation and a feast day for my saints throughout the world and the forgiveness of sin for everyone who believes in your name.” The synaxery was probably edited in the fourteenth century; see Basset, *Synaxaire*, 367, and René-Georges Coquin and Aziz S. Atiya, “Synaxarion, Copto-Arabic,” in *Coptic Encyclopedia*, 7:2171–90.

48. In the Coptic Church today, the celebration of Maundy Thursday, especially the partaking of the Eucharist that day, comes closest to a day of forgiveness. A separate rite, the *sagda*, or “prostration,” is celebrated at Pentecost at the ninth hour, but it emphasizes the descent of the Holy Spirit and does not involve the forgiveness of sin.

49. The painting is now in the Coptic Museum in Cairo. A black and white photograph of the painting as originally discovered may be found in J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara* (1906–1907) (Cairo: IFAO, 1908), vol. 2, Plate XLIV, with a description on p. 64. Quibell did not supply a color representation because, he opined, the painting “was not worth reproducing in colour.” Unfortunately, the painting was subsequently damaged in removal; a photograph of it in its current state may be found in Atalla, *Coptic Art*, 15. Photographs of the painting in both states may be found in Paul van Moorsel and Mathilde Huijbers, “Repertory of the Preserved Wall Paintings from the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara,” *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, eds. Hjalmar Torp et al. (Rome: Bretschneider, 1981), 9:131–35 and Plates IV–V. Marguerite Rassart-Debergh and Jacques Debergh, “A propos de trois peintures de Saqqara,” *Acta*, eds. Torp et al., 9:187–201, discuss the painting and provide drawings of it. Rassart-Debergh, following Quibell’s notes, has reconstructed the painting by adding to the right of Onnophrius (our left) another penitent and a tree; see her “La décoration picturale du monastère de Saqqara: Essai de reconstitution,” in *Acta*, eds. Torp et al., 41 and Fig. 15.1 (p. 40).

50. Rassart-Debergh and Debergh, “Trois peintures,” 191, suggest that the painting originally showed Onnophrius, Paphnutius, Macarius, Apollo, Phib, and Amoun; at some point, they argue, a monk retouched the painting and effaced the name of Amoun.

51. ΠΕΙΩΤ ΑΠΑ [ΦΙΒ] ΠΟΤΗΝΕ ΕΤΕΝΩΤ, “Father Apa [Phib] the faithful priest.” There are three spaces available for the name, so “Phib” (ΦΙΒ) seems probable, as W. E. Crum long ago suggested. See Coquin, “Apollon de Titkooh,” 445; Rassart-Debergh and Debergh, “Trois peintures,” 190. The last figure is a priest, which might

front of the last figure (Phib?) is a smaller figure, bent over, who is touching the feet of Apa Apollo and the last figure in an act of prostration. Scholars have made a number of suggestions regarding this prostrating figure and the meaning of the painting.<sup>52</sup> R.-G. Coquin, however, convincingly argues that the prostrating figure is a monk and that, since he is touching the feet of *both* Apollo *and* the last figure (Phib), he is in fact performing the act of *metanoia* associated with the two saints, the feast day described in the *Life of Phib*:

It seems to us therefore that this monk was represented in this position of repentance and touching the feet of the two saints at the same time . . . as the symbol of the whole community of anchorites assembled by Apollo, performing the rite established by the founder for the feast day of Apa Phib and for the monastery church where the body of his friend reposed.<sup>53</sup>

If Coquin is correct, and I believe he is, then this painting preserves a vivid depiction of the rite of repentance described in the *Life of Phib*. Two significant changes have, however, taken place: in the *Life of Phib*, the entire community prostrates itself on Phib's feast day and thus gain his intercession for the forgiveness of their sins. In the painting, the members of the community (as represented by the penitent monk) prostrate themselves at the feet of Apollo and Phib; there is no mention in the *Life* of prostration before Apollo. It seems likely to me, though, that the prostration by the community depicted in the *Life* took place at Phib's tomb (see par. 12) or, to be more precise, on top of it: Apollo, at Christ's command, ordered a church to be built on top of Phib's grave (par. 16). The painting, therefore, represents with human figures the veneration that took place at Phib's tomb; but intercession in both would still come

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argue against it being Phib, since no literary text calls him a priest. Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 445–46, believes that Phib was in fact a priest and argues that a rite of repentance in his name makes better sense if he was a priest, but it also seems possible that Phib's priesthood could have been bestowed on him *ex post facto* by hagiography and tradition.

52. Rassart-Debergh and Debergh, "Trois peintures," 190, believe that it is Anoub who is at the feet of Apollo and Phib, since "Apollo, Phib, and Anoub in effect constitute the 'triad' of Bawit," and are found together in numerous inscriptions at Bawit and Saqqara; see their article for earlier suggestions. Interestingly, "Anoub" seems to have been mistakenly inserted for "Phib" in par. 12 of the *Life*.

53. Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 446. Van Moorsel and Huijbers, "Repertory," 9:131, 133, follow Quibell (*Saqqara* II:64) and agree with Coquin by terming this figure a penitent. They state, 132 n. 3, that cleaning has made some writing visible near the fourth figure and hope to address the problem of identification in a future article.

from the saint—or saints. This is the second change. Originally, it seems, Phib was the sole intercessor; it is not surprising, however, that later the great Apollo, probably after his death, became cointercessor with his disciple Phib.

This evidence appears to be decisive. Coquin and other scholars have, however, overlooked one more crucial, and fascinating, piece of evidence from the same monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara that complicates the picture (both literally and figuratively) of a rite of prostration. An inscription there speaks of the rite, but makes Jeremias, not Apollo or Phib, the “remover of sins”:

O Father, O Son, O Holy Spirit, Apa Jeremias, Apa Enoch, Ama Sibylla,<sup>54</sup> our father Peter, our father Paul, our father John: this is the place where our lord and father Apa Jeremias prostrated himself [*pahtf*] until he removed the sins of the people of the whole world. May [his] holy blessing descend upon us. Amen, Amen, so be it, Amen.<sup>55</sup>

This inscription would seem to show that individual monasteries adapted a rite of prostration for the forgiveness of sin to their local saints, whether Apollo, Phib, or, as in this case, Jeremias.

What is fascinating at Saqqara is that a painting at the monastery shows Apollo (and Phib?) as the intermediaries, while an inscription there demonstrates that Jeremias led the rite for his community and thereby gained intercession for his people. Perhaps the painting reveals that the monks were aware of the origins of a ritual of repentance with Apollo and Phib as intermediaries while the inscription shows that Jeremias took their part as intercessor at Saqqara. Scattered bits of evidence demonstrate the authority that these monastic leaders had: according to the *Life of Paul of Tamma*, Apollo taught his children while sitting on a *thronos*, which normally designated a bishop's chair.<sup>56</sup> The inscriptions at Saqqara plentifully show that Jeremias occupied an equally exalted

54. Ama Sibylla was apparently not a monastic but rather a mythological figure, a Coptic metamorphosis of the Sibyl. She is invoked in over sixty inscriptions at Saqqara and was pictured at Bawit with the Virtues of the Spirit. For a discussion, see Tim Vivian, “Ama Sibylla of Saqqara: Prioress or Prophet, Monastic or Mythological Being?” *Bulletin of the Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society* (forthcoming).

55. Sir Herbert Thompson, “The Coptic Inscriptions,” in J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, vol. IV, # 188 (p. 55). The relevant sentence in Coptic is ⲡⲁⲛⲓⲉ ⲡⲏⲁ ⲏⲧⲁⲡⲏⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥⲓ ⲏⲓⲱⲧ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲓⲉⲣⲏⲏⲓⲁⲥ ⲡⲁⲩⲧⲓⲥ ⲉⲓⲭⲓⲱⲥⲓ ⲱⲁⲏⲧⲉⲩⲣⲓ ⲏⲏⲟⲃⲉ ⲏⲡⲁⲗⲁⲟⲥ ⲏⲡⲓⲕⲟⲥⲏⲟⲥ ⲧⲏⲣⲉⲩ ⲏⲏⲁⲩ.

56. For the text, see Amélineau, “Vie de Paul,” 760. For θρόνος, see W. G. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 655A.



position; it seems reasonable to suppose that Jeremias' community still honored the feast day of Phib while Jeremias led them in the rite. Perhaps the painting is older than the inscription and shows the early custom of the ritual at Jeremias' monastery (with Apollo and Phib as intercessors), while the inscription is later and shows how the rite developed as the power of intercession was transferred from Phib and Apollo to Jeremias. Or it is probable that the inscription was written after Jeremias' death (since it uses the past tense) and located intercessory power in the saint *post mortem*. At this remove we do not have enough evidence to delineate either the chronology of the ritual or its particulars and the belief that lay behind it. Nevertheless, the painting and inscription at Saqqara do clearly demonstrate that an act of repentance, associated with Phib and Apollo, was known at Jeremias' monastery, and that an act of prostration for the removal of "the sins of the people of the whole world" was practiced there.

Throughout Middle Egypt, then, from the White Monastery in the south to the monastery of Saint Jeremias in the north, painting, papyrus, and inscription powerfully illustrate how the "cult of the saints" in monastic Egypt in late antiquity was particularized in a specific religious ritual, the rite of prostration for the forgiveness of sins; they demonstrate how sanctity and holiness—and even salvation—could reside in God's elect. But we need to remember that these sources point further, and deeper: the *Life of Phib* strongly emphasizes that Phib's feast day is a "gift" or simulacrum of the great acts of forgiveness that have come with Christ's incarnation and resurrection.<sup>57</sup> Intercession, the *Life* makes clear, comes *from* Christ, *through* his saints. Many Coptic monks of late antiquity had this hope and belief, and they enacted it in ritual throughout Middle and Upper Egypt on the feast day of Apa Phib.

57. One might note here the emphasis on the incarnation and resurrection, not the crucifixion. Until quite recently, crucifixes were extremely rare in Coptic Christianity.

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THE LIFE OF PHIB<sup>58</sup>

The Life of Our Holy Father Apa Phib the Holy Anchorite,  
which Papohe, the Disciple of the Perfect and Blessed Apa Apollo,  
Narrated.

Blessed Apa Phib Went to His Rest on the Twenty-Fifth of Paope<sup>59</sup>  
in the Peace of God.

May His Blessing Be Upon Us. Amen.

1. Truly what the holy psalmist David says is true when he cries out, “The righteous will be remembered forever.”<sup>60</sup> And again, “The righteous person will be exalted like a spreading palm tree, like a cedar in Lebanon.”<sup>61</sup> What the psalmist said was fulfilled concerning this saint.

2. There was a brother whose name was Apa Phib,<sup>62</sup> who was from Sinemoun in the Shmoun nome.<sup>63</sup> He went to my holy father Apa Apollo and became a monk at his side. They remained together about five years. After <Apa> Petra <went to his rest,><sup>64</sup> the two of them committed themselves to each other on the mountain of Titkooh.<sup>65</sup> It was there that he went to his rest. The two of them were together, performing great ascetic practices;<sup>66</sup> multitudes of men were counted with them and they did not send them away in spite of their numbers.

3. Listen to me, my beloved brothers in the Lord, and I will tell you of the great works and living teachings of our blessed father, Apa Apollo, the man of God, who offered his body as a holy sacrifice to God,<sup>67</sup> who became a dwelling

58. Translated from the text edited by Orlandi, *Phif*, 20–36.

59. Arabic Babeh; October 22 (Julian).

60. Ps 112.6; 111.7 (LXX).

61. See Prov 10.7, Ps 92.12 (91.13).

62. “Phib” is spelled “Phif” (ϥϣ) throughout the text, which is the spelling Orlandi uses, but since “Phib” is the more commonly used spelling, I have decided to adopt it.

63. Sinemoun is otherwise unknown. On Shmoun, see n. 17 above.

64. The text, ΔΑΠΕΤΡΑ ΕΝΤΟΣ, is corrupt, but the British Library fragments say that Apollo had a spiritual brother, Petra; after his death, Apollo and Phib joined together. See Coquin, “Apollon de Titkooh,” 437.

65. The “mountain” is spelled “Titkooh” (†ΤΚΟΟ?) here, although in the rest of the *Life* the spelling is Tkoooh (ΤΚΟΟ?); since Titkooh is the usual spelling, it has been adopted here. Titkooh lay in the nome of Hermopolis Magna (Shmoun); see Timm, *Christlich-koptische Ägypten*, 6:2700. In Coptic, “mountain,” *tooh*, can also mean “monastic community,” so throughout the *Life* it may well have a double meaning; see “Mountain and Desert: The Geographies of Early Coptic Monasticism,” in Tim Vivian, *Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt and the Life of Onnophrius* (rev. ed.; Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1999), 18–26.

66. *Polutia* (Gk. *politeia*) usually means “a (monastic) way of life,” but here is used in the plural; see Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1114A(G).

67. See Eph 5.2.

place for the Father and a place of rest for the Son and a place of assembly for the Holy Spirit. I, Papohe, the most unworthy steward, was living as a small child in the house of my parents. God sent his angel who took me from my father's house and led me north on the paths of righteousness. He brought me to the good shepherd, the savior of souls.<sup>68</sup> I came into port into the harbor of salvation where there are no thieves;<sup>69</sup> I am talking about our beloved father, blessed Apa Apollo, the true Israelite, in whom there was no deceit.<sup>70</sup>

4. On this mountain, before the Lord revealed his glory to him, I knocked at his door and he immediately came out to see me; his face was relaxed and smiling, for my father was in every way a gentle person before God and his fellow human beings, especially towards all good persons. He gladly tested me to see if I measured up and made me a monk with him.<sup>71</sup> I was worthy to remain beneath the shadow of his holy prayers and his fatherhood.<sup>72</sup> Our beloved brother Apa Phib the holy was there with him. The two of them lived the monastic life<sup>73</sup> together with great ascetic practices and great acts of devotion,<sup>74</sup> and there were numerous men with them. Apa Phib was a person who loved quiet, wishing to remain in the desert at all times living the monastic way of life.<sup>75</sup> My father was a person of peace who loved the entire image of God as a single person.<sup>76</sup> The brothers gathered around him like bees collecting honey in their mouths, listening to his words of life and his holy commandments, becoming children of the great God who was present through our father.

5. I remained a year with them on this mountain. Afterwards, we traveled from there and continued walking where it was completely mountainous, like wild beasts. The brothers had heard about my father every place we stayed and would come to him and receive spiritual edification from him. He would tell them the contents of their souls, comforting all of them with his sweet words,

68. See Jn 10.11.

69. On thieves and their absence, see Mt 6.19–20. Coming into the security and safety of port is a common image in late antiquity.

70. See Mt 6.19, Jn 1.47.

71. "Tested" is literally "weighed" (*shi*). John the Little was said to equal all of Scetis in virtue; the image used in the *Life of John the Little* 16 (AP John the Little 36) is of John balancing (*shi*) with a single finger a scale holding the virtues of all the other monks. See Maged S. Mikhail and Tim Vivian, trans., "Life of Saint John the Little," *Coptic Church Review* 18:1–2 (1997): 28. "Scetis" itself is Coptic for "to weigh the heart" (*shi hêt*); see the *Life of John the Little* 3 (Mikhail and Vivian, 21).

72. See Ps 17.8, 36.6, Isa 49.2, 51.16, among others.

73. Coptic: *poluteue*.

74. Coptic: *polutia*.

75. Coptic: *poluteue*.

76. Coptic ⲡⲉⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲧⲏⲣⲥ ⲡⲡⲓⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲉⲥ ⲡⲟⲩⲣⲱⲛⲉ ⲡⲟⲩⲱⲧ. Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 441, says this phrase does not make sense, that it represents the ancient editor's bungled rendering of Greek into Coptic. Coquin, however, believes that the phrase refers to Phib whereas the subject seems to have shifted suddenly to Apollo. Might it be a reference to the Alexandrian and Coptic insistence on the single nature of Christ (so-called "Monophysitism")? The paragraph might have originally been about Apollo, since the portions about Phib seem like additions.

while they gave glory to God.<sup>77</sup> I remained a year by my father's side. There too was Apa Phib, a person who loved quiet at all times. My father was an ascetic. I myself would walk ministering to their worldly needs, concerned with the stewardship for the saints. Therefore he called me Papohe the steward.

6. One day while the three of us were together, giving glory to God, my father turned to Apa Phib, his face glad. He said to him, "I see that you love quiet, my son, and that you hate human vainglory. It is written in the Gospel, 'It is impossible for a city to be hidden when it is set upon a mountain, nor is a lamp lit and placed under a bushel basket; rather, it is placed on a lampstand and gives light to everyone in the house.'<sup>78</sup> You, then, are the hidden lamp, my son, which will be placed on the lampstand where it will give light to everyone in the house and will spread its incense throughout the world. It will be a gift for the forgiveness of sin each year on your feast day."

Immediately Apa Phib prostrated himself and entreated my father.<sup>79</sup> Then my father answered and said, "Get up, my son, it was not I who spoke but the Holy Spirit, who prophesies concerning things that will happen before they have happened. Now, therefore, keep this mystery until it is made manifest. For it is written in the Deuteronomy of Moses, 'The things that are hidden belong to the Lord your God but those that are manifest belong to you and your children.'<sup>80</sup>

7. Apa Phib answered and said, "Command me and I will speak to you. Do not be angry with me. Truly I shall not speak out of a desire for greatness nor with vain love of glory; no, I marvel at the Holy Spirit who is in those who are honorable before God and who agree with each other in what they say."

Blessed Apa Apollo said, "Speak, my son."

Apa Phib answered, saying, "One day when I was little, living in the home of my parents, I was shepherding their sheep in the field when a holy old man of God passed by me in the field. Since evening had already come, I invited him into the sheepfold.<sup>81</sup> I repeatedly begged him to eat some bread. He obeyed me and

77. The giving of spiritual counsel (usually by an elder to a younger monk) is extremely important in early monasticism: in the *Apophthegmata patrum*, Abba Paphnutius reports that he went to see elders twice a month, walking some twelve miles (*AP* Paphnutius 3; PG 65:380), and Abba John the Little used to sit in front of the church on weekends so that monks might approach him about their thoughts (*AP* John Colobos 8; PG 65:205). So customary was this practice that Macarius the Great was bothered when two young foreigners did not come to tell him their thoughts (*AP* Macarius 33). See also Tim Vivian, "Words to Live By: 'A Conversation that the Elders Had with One Another Concerning Thoughts (ΠΕΡΙ ΛΟΓΙΣΜΩΝ),' " *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 39.2 (1995), and Stewart, "Radical Honesty about the Self."

78. Mt 5.15.

79. "Prostrated": *-paht-*.

80. Dt 29.29.

81. Father Lazarus, a hermit at the Monastery of Saint Antony by the Red Sea and formerly an Australian, showed me his places of prayer, one of which was modeled on an Australian sheepfold; he pointed out to me as I sat in it how snug it was and good at keeping out the wind.

ate the bread. I did this small kindness for him.<sup>82</sup> He slept beside me until morning. When morning had come, he was about to leave and I prostrated myself<sup>83</sup> before him so he would bless me and he did so, and he also said to me the very words that you spoke to me: 'There will be a day for the forgiveness of sin in your name.' Now, then, I marvel at this for I do not know what will happen. One day I was worthy to have the Lord call me to your fatherhood. Now as it pleases the Lord, may his good will be done."

8. Apa Apollo, the athlete of Christ who gives victory to his right hand and his left, answered, "Listen to me and I will speak this word to you, for it was the Lord who spoke to me. I will not arrogantly speak but I will explain to all of you what will happen to all of us together. My Savior said to me these words that Paul used while writing to the Corinthians concerning brother Apollo: 'I strongly urged him to come to you and perhaps now is not the time for him to come to you. But he will come if he finds the opportunity.'" <sup>84</sup> (The Holy Spirit, therefore, continued to urge my father to come now. My father answered that he was coming if he found the opportunity.)<sup>85</sup> "Now, then, my children, we are ready to bear everything that the Lord will command us. His <will> be done."<sup>86</sup> Glory be to him for ever and ever. Amen."

9. After all these things, we went to a mountain of the desert opposite a village called Tahrouj.<sup>87</sup> We found some holes in the rock there and made some small dwellings and stayed in them and lived the monastic life with numerous ascetic practices.<sup>88</sup> All the brothers, when they heard that my father was there, went to him. They heard the words of life from his mouth. There was, however, no water in that desert place. My father said to me, "Papohe, my son, dig in the earth and we will see that God will give us water for the sake of the brothers <who are coming><sup>89</sup> to us." When we dug down four cubits, a spring of water rushed up,

82. Literally: "I did a little good for him" (ⲁⲓⲣ ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲟⲩ ⲏⲡⲉⲧⲏⲁⲛⲟⲩⲥ ⲏⲁⲥ). This sentiment and action occurs elsewhere in the *Life* (10, 14), seemingly associated with the giving and eating of bread, and appears to be an important part of monastic hospitality, here projected back to Papohe in his youth.

83. Coptic: *-paht*.

84. See I Cor 16.12. The name Apollo (Apollōs) in the New Testament is spelled the same as the name of the monk.

85. This parenthesis seems to point to Apollo's coming to Titkooh; see pars. 11–14.

86. Reading ⲡⲉⲕⲟⲩⲟⲩⲱ ⲏⲁⲣⲉⲥⲱⲡⲉ (with which par. 7 concludes) instead of ⲡⲉⲕⲟⲩⲟⲩⲱ ⲏⲁⲣⲉⲥⲱⲡⲉ.

87. Tahrouj (Greek Teruthis, Arabic Dahrut or Dayrut) was in the nome of Oxyrhynchus (al-Bahnasa), east of Bawit, near the west bank of the Nile; see Timm, *Christlich-koptische Ägypten*, 2:493, who reports that in the Byzantine era there was a monastery in the area of Tahrouj and that Coptic economic documents from the Wadi Sarga often name Tahrouj in connection with wine deliveries.

88. "Monastic life": *-poluteue*; "ascetic practices": *polutia*. See par. 4 and the notes there.

89. Reading <ⲉⲧⲏⲏⲟⲩ> with Orlandi, which was omitted because of homeoteleuton with ⲏⲉⲥⲏⲏⲟⲩ preceding it.

good and very sweet, with water for us to drink.<sup>90</sup> We spent two years drinking from it with those who came to us. Then my father said to me, "Let us make a well and place it at the disposal of the brothers who come to us. Surely the Lord has shown us that 'every place you dwell, I will have it remain for ever.'" <sup>91</sup>

10. When we had finished digging the well, we left to go to the place in Upper Egypt called [the monastery of] Apa Pamin.<sup>92</sup> While we were walking, we came to the mountain of Titkooh, this mountain where God granted his blessing for eternal life.<sup>93</sup> We visited some God-loving brothers on that mountain. They showed us great kindness.<sup>94</sup> Our beloved brother Apa Phib went to his rest there on the twenty-fifth of Paope at the third hour of the day.<sup>95</sup> We were grief stricken, very sad and discouraged at our loss. We buried him there.

11. Afterwards, we left that place and went to the monastery of Apa Pamin. We stayed there a few days, and the brothers gathered around us; there was a multitude of them. Afterwards, the Savior appeared to our father; he spoke with him, saying, "Peace be with you, my friend and honored and beloved companion<sup>96</sup> of my Father. Behold! The time has come for you to reveal my glory and for my name to be glorified on earth through you. Arise, therefore, and go to the mountain of Titkooh and stay there, for my Father has given it to you as an inheritance. For this reason I placed there the bones of your companion, Apa Phib, so you too would abide there."

He answered and said to the Savior, "Look, here is a man who is able to care for stewardship of this sort. For I am a man who renounces all such things. I beg you, my Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not have me do this."

12. The Savior answered and said to him, "Apollo, my chosen one, this is what the Father has determined for you from the beginning so he can establish your name there. When I came down to this world from my Father, he spoke to me with compassion, 'My Son, do not be sad that you are going down to the

90. In the *Life of Antony* 49.7, Antony "came to a very high mountain, and at the foot of the mountain was very clear water, sweet and very cold." Finding water would be one of the first priorities for any monastic community. A cubit (*mahe*) was a measurement based on the length of the forearm, about eighteen inches. So the well here was approximately six feet deep.

91. See I Kgs 8.13?

92. Pamin (if this is the same person referred to here) was a monk of the early fourth century who is associated particularly with al-Ashmunein; his tomb was the site of a cult and healing and numerous inscriptions demonstrate his renown. See René-Georges Coquin, "Pamin, Saint," *Coptic Encyclopedia*, 6:1878.

93. "Granted" uneasily renders Coptic ⲙⲁⲛⲓ, which would normally mean "commanded." Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," suggests, 442, that ⲙⲁⲛⲓ represents Gk. συγγωρεῖν.

94. See n. 82.

95. About 9 a.m.

96. I have not translated Gk. *melos* ("member") here, which occurs after "companion," and have silently omitted it hereafter (see n. 102). This usage also occurs in the Coptic *Life of Macarius of Scetis*.

world, which is filled with suffering and groaning. Concerning your suffering,<sup>97</sup> my Son, I will appoint the day that you are born from the holy virgin Mary as a day of absolution for the forgiveness of sin for the world.<sup>98</sup> For everyone who has faith in your cross and the resurrection of your flesh I will tear up the bond of indebtedness that they have incurred because of their sins<sup>99</sup> and I will give them to you, my beloved Son. And on the day of your glorious resurrection I will allow there to be a day of absolution for salvation and the forgiveness of sin for the whole world.<sup>100</sup> And I will reveal a holy place on the earth at the end of time and I will establish there an act of repentance<sup>101</sup> for salvation and a feast day for my saints throughout the world and the forgiveness of sin for everyone who believes in your name.'

"The gift that my Father gave to me I now give to you also; moreover, I will establish it there and they will proclaim the name of your holy companion,<sup>102</sup> Apa Phib. Do not be afraid, I am with you everywhere; I will give you a great and famous name, and all the people will hear of you and will come to your site for this gift and will worship at your holy place. All the people will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will tell us his way and we will walk in it,"' just as Isaiah the prophet spoke.<sup>103</sup> It is also written, 'There will be an altar of the Lord in the land of Egypt and a pillar to the Lord at its borders.'<sup>104</sup> The place that I have given you is the altar and the pillar is the body of my servant <Phib>.<sup>105</sup> See now, I have shown you everything that will happen to you in all the designs of my Father. Be strong concerning what I have told you and do not let your heart doubt. I will place great blessings upon your sanctuary in every way and I will have your children called the lamp-bearers of Christ. Everyone who keeps your commandments I will give to you as children in my kingdom. Everyone who perseveres in your work and service will be your children in my Father's house."

13. Immediately my father called me and told me all the words the Savior had

97. Literally "the suffering (*hise*) of your suffering (*skulmos*).<sup>97</sup> The Coptic (*hise*) seems to be a redundant translation of the Greek (*skulmos*). See Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 441.

98. "Absolution": Coptic/Gk. *eleutheria*. Lampe (449B) cites the Liturgy of Gregory of Nazianzus (PG 36:728A), which has a prayer of absolution before communion: εὐχὴ τῆς ἐλευθερίας. "For the forgiveness of sin": Coptic *nka nobe*. This phrase is probably redundant, a Coptic translation of Gk *eleutheria*, which precedes it.

99. See Col 2.14.

100. See n. 98 above; here *eleutheria* and *nka nobe* are joined by "and."

101. Coptic/Gk. *metanoia*.

102. Coptic ⲡⲣⲏⲣⲏⲗⲟⲥ, which is a "curious expression" (Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 440), a hybrid of Greek and Coptic. It is attested, however, in the Nag Hammadi texts and in a Coptic martyrdom; see Coquin, "Apollon de Titkooh," 440 n. 31.

103. Isa 2.3.

104. Isa 19.19.

105. The text has "Anoub," but this must be a mistake.



told him. As I listened to them I was astounded and said to him, "My father, if this is what pleases the Lord, let us do it. Let us follow the Lord and keep his commandments. Those who do everything that the Lord commands are good; they are very elect and honored and they will enter the house of the Lord together. We will follow the path that he has appointed for us, just as he wishes."

14. After all these things we rose and left in order to go to the mountain of Titkooh, the mountain where God commanded<sup>106</sup> us to go, which he had prepared for my father Apollo, and we went up to the mountain across from a village called Taparouue.<sup>107</sup> We visited some God-serving brothers who showed us great kindness.<sup>108</sup> We slept there until morning. When morning had come, we went north to Titkooh. When the brothers there heard that we had come, they came out to greet us with great rejoicing and welcomed us to their community. We told them the mystery that we had seen and they were amazed and said to us, "We too beheld a mystery: when we were sleeping at night we heard the sound of a trumpet sounding forth, crying out with a loud voice three times like this: 'Behold! The good shepherd who has pastured his sheep in the pasture of life has come!' Afterwards, a choir of angels spent the entire night singing and dancing over the body of blessed Apa Phib, singing a hymn with the angels answering them [*sic*]: 'This mountain is going to rejoice and be glorified. This is the mountain of the Lord, the exalted mountain, the established mountain, the fertile mountain. This is the mountain where God has wished to dwell forever. This is the house of God, the dwelling place of the righteous.' When we heard these things, we were very afraid and spent the night gathered together until morning, praising God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and marveling at what we had heard. Now God our Savior has sent you to us! You are the shepherd who pastures all of us, young and old, in goodness. Behold! Our bodies and our souls are in your hands. Be for us a father and we will be your children."

15. My father answered, saying, "If what you wish is of God, we will do as you say." And we gathered together doing the work of twenty men in front of my father. My father was occupied with the word of God and the teaching and canons of our holy fathers the apostles while I was responsible for the needs of the brothers. Great powers and wonders occurred by means of my father, for his name became famous throughout the surrounding area and people brought to him all who were sick and he cured all of them. Our numbers increased little by little and we grew in God. God did great good things through my father.

16. We continued our work and built a small church over the body of our blessed brother Apa Phib. The brothers continued to gather in it every day before they ate their bread.<sup>109</sup> Afterwards the Savior appeared to my father; he spoke

106. Coptic ⲡⲟⲩⲏ; see n. 93 above.

107. This village is attested in ancient documents; see Timm, *Christlich-koptische Ägypten*, 6:2510.

108. See nn. 82 and 94.

109. If the monks had a single meal, it was normally taken at the ninth hour or about 3 p.m. According to the *Historia monachorum* 8.50, this was when the monks of Apollo's community ate, when they were not fasting.

with him, saying, "Peace be with you, my honored friend and companion. I am with you. Behold! I will bring throngs of people to you and they will become very numerous. Arise and build a great church as I instruct you so the people will have it as a dwelling place." The Savior walked with my father and instructed him concerning the entire boundary of the church. He told him its length and its breadth. The Savior said to him, "Behold! I have appointed for you Michael the Archangel, for it is he who will minister to your site. Michael's words will be your words. Bring in Papohe to serve as deacon." When the Savior had said these things, he ascended into heaven.

17. Afterwards, my father called me and told me all these words. We built the church according to the measurements he instructed. When we had increased and grown in numbers, my father said to me, "Behold! The day of our blessed brother Apa Phib is nigh. Let us send for the brothers in all the monastic dwellings<sup>110</sup> and let us celebrate an Agape with them with joy and rejoicing because it is the Savior who said these things concerning him: 'I will reveal my glory each year on his feast day when my name is glorified in all the earth.'"

I did as my father told me. I sent brothers to all the monastic dwellings. I gathered all the brothers together on the holy day that the Lord appointed for our brother Apa Phib. When we gathered together on the twenty-fourth of Paope we passed the whole night of the twenty-fifth of Paope with rejoicing and gladness, celebrating a great *synaxis* with psalms in gladness and rejoicing in the Spirit.

18. When morning came, a young brother named Zachary went to his rest. He was a sweet child in everyone's eyes and my father loved him very much on account of the good things he did for the brothers. We took him into the church. The brothers continued to attend to him until they buried him, for it was the sixth hour.<sup>111</sup> When they had buried him, we rose right away and prayed together, and my father had us prostrate ourselves<sup>112</sup> a long time on our faces. Afterwards, my father rose and stood and spoke to the brothers, "Truly, God has forgiven the sins of everyone who prostrates himself<sup>113</sup> here today as on the day they were born."<sup>114</sup>

Some of the brothers did not believe, while others believed him. Up jumped young brother Zachary who had died! He sat up and the burial linens fell off him. He got up and stood and walked this way and that. Truly, he cried out, "One is God, Christ Jesus our Lord!" Everyone standing there was amazed and he said, "Believe me, God-loving people, God has forgiven the sins of everyone

110. *Toou*, literally "mountains"; see n. 65 above. This is probably the meaning, rather than "monasteries." The community was most likely a semianchoritic one where the monks lived in scattered monastic dwellings and gathered together on Saturday and Sunday. But see n. 23 above.

111. About noon.

112. Coptic: *-paht-*.

113. Coptic: *paht-*.

114. This seems to suggest that the monks became as free of sin as on the day they were born.

standing here today as on the day they were born. And whoever prostrates himself<sup>115</sup> here today will have his sins forgiven in the name of our brother Apa Phib. This is a great mystery, my brothers and God-loving fathers.”

When he had said these things, he went to sleep, and immediately the linens wrapped around him again. The multitude that saw him were amazed and their hearts were strengthened.<sup>116</sup> They knew that the act of repentance<sup>117</sup> was from God and that God had bestowed the gift of the forgiveness of sins on our brother Apa Phib. To the glory of the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

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115. Coptic: *paht*-.

116. The Arabic synaxery (Basset, *Synaxaire*, 368) gives a shortened version of this story; in it Zachary is not named, being only “a monk who had died.”

117. *Metanoia*.